This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

US 12779.12

Harvard College Library

GIFT OF

THE AUTHOR

US 12779.12

Harvard College Library

GIFT OF

THE AUTHOR

Lowell

US 12779.12

JOSEPH STEBBINS

A PIONEER AT THE OUTBREAK OF THE REVOLUTION

By GEORGE SHELDON

SALEM, MASS.
THE SALEM PRESS COMPANY
1916

Lower

US 127:

JOSEPH STEBBINS

A PIONEER AT THE OUTBREAK OF THE REVOLUTION

By GEORGE SHELDON

SALEM, MASS.
THE SALEM PRESS COMPANY
1916

W S 12779.12

The Author

HOME OF COL. JOSEPH STEBBINS, NOW OCCUPIED BY HIS GRANDSON, GEORGE SHELDON

JOSEPH STEBBINS

A PIONEER IN THE OUTBREAK OF THE REVOLUTION

By George Sheldon.

There cannot be too much honor paid to the memory of those who set themselves to the work of freeing this colony from the tyrannical grasp of Great Britain. They were men of nerve, persistence and faith in their cause and in one another. They had the firm belief that they should finally succeed in their herculean task.

That the task was herculean is graphically shown in the following cry uttered in March, 1775. "Are we ready for war? Where are our stores —where are our arms—where our soldiers—where our generals—where our money—the sinews of War? They are nowhere to be found. In truth, we are poor, we are naked, we are defenceless, yet we talk of assuming the front of war! of assuming it, too, against a nation, one of the most formidable in the world; a nation ready and armed at all points; her navies riding triumphant on every sea, her armies never marching but to certain victory! What is to be the issue of the struggle we are called upon to court? What can be the issue, in the comparative circumstances of the two countries, but to yield up this country an easy prey to Great Britain." This and like eloquent addresses had no effect on the New England rebels of the Revolution.

Deerfield, as a town, was at the forefront of this rebellion. Deerfield was not alone, but this sketch of her history is given as an illustration of what was going on all around her.

As early as 1770 the Deerfield rebels had made up their minds for business, and had gradually come into civil power. For ten years previously the loyalists had held control of the town, but in 1770 the rebels defied the loyalists and King George and elected rebel town officers.

Prominent among the men of Deerfield who were active in this movement was my grandfather, Joseph Stebbins. July 28, 1774, when Stebbins was twenty-four years old, the spirit of patriotism of the "Sons of Liberty" had reached such a height that preparations had been made for setting up a tall "Liberty Pole" upon the village street. Party spirit ran high, and little courtesy was shown on either side. There were a few Tories in town, and this Pole, which had been brought here too late in the day to be erected, was sawed asunder by one of them when darkness could conceal the actor who boastingly made record of the act in his diary. This diary is now in my possession.

The next morning the rebels procured another stately tree from the forest, and planted it firmly on the Street within six rods of my grandfather's house, with a liberty flag floating defiantly therefrom.

Stebbins was one of those who well knew that proceedings like these would call down upon the heads of the rebels the vengeance of one of the most powerful nations of the earth, and he early saw the necessity of preparing to resist force by force. He was one of the leaders in organizing and drilling a company of the "Sons of Liberty." The strength of the town of Deerfield was behind them as we have already seen.

Oct. 7, 1774 a town meeting was called and a rebel elected to the Provincial Congress. Oct. 17, a new military company "to be under the orders of the new Congress" was organized here. Nov. 11, Col. David Field and Major David Dickinson were sent to a rebel military field meeting at Northampton.

Dec. 5, the town voted to direct the selectmen to procure a stock of powder and lead.

A Minute company was formed and might have been seen actively drilling with Jonas Locke as Captain and Joseph Stebbins as Lieutenant.

It so happened that on a day which turned out to be one of the most eventful in the history of Deerfield—April 20, 1775—a town meeting was held in the schoolhouse, when it was,—"Voted that ye Minute Company, so called in this Town (as an Encouragement to their perfecting themselves in the Military Art) be allowed by the Town ye following sums, viz.: to ye Capt & two Lieuts each two shillings, to ye clerk one shilling & six pence, and to the non-commissioned Officers & Privates one shilling each for one-half day in a week, until ordered otherwise by ye Selectmen who are hereby appointed a Committee to determine how long ye said Company shall Draw ye above mentioned wages."

It was then provided that the company should receive back pay for time spent in exercising, at one-half the above rates. Thus the town adopted and backed up all the rebels had done.

Deerfield had now a little paid rebel army of its own which had been drilling for months and my grandfather was an officer. Bear in mind this was more than fourteen months before the Declaration of Independence.

The little far away town had this day provided for a contingency which had already occurred. Even while the meeting was deliberating men on horseback were hurriedly spreading the startling news in every direction that the war had begun. The schoolhouse door had scarcely closed when the resounding hoof beats of the galloping horse, and the hoarse call "To Arms!" of the excited rider were heard on our village green. "Gage has fired upon the people! Minute men to the rescue! Now is the time! Cambridge the place!" and the twain are off like a meteor. Then there was hurrying to and fro and arming in hot haste, and before the hours of the day were numbered forty-nine men under Capt. Jonas Locke and Lieut. Joseph Stebbins were on their way to the scene of bloodshed to join the

band of patriots under Gen. Artemas Ward already gathering and encircling Gage in its toils. The blood of the colony was at fever heat and Gage had tapped the first vein at Concord.

By general consent Gen. Ward had been placed at the head of the movement against Gage, and had been directed to raise an army of 30,000 men for this object. At the outbreak of the Revolution, Ward was one of the leading men of Massachusetts in both civil and military life, and in June, 1775, the second Continental Congress appointed him first Major-General, ranking next to Washington in the American army.

A letter in my possession gives bits of information, not elsewhere found, as to how the Deerfield company fared on the way, and how they were received by Gen. Ward. This letter is singularly devoid of sentiment. There is not a word regarding the main cause of the war, and not a hint is found concerning the reception they received from the people as they struggled along. It is addressed to "Col. Selah Barnard" at Deerfield, and written by Isaac Parker, Clerk of the Company. The letter is given in full.

Waltham April 24 [Monday] 1775

Sir having an Opportunity to send by the Barror we thought it Best to Acquaint you as well as we could of our wellfare, we are safe arrived and are took our Quarters at Brewers to night But we are not able to tell whether this will be our Quarters long, our Regement is not all arrived, Liut Col Williams [Samuel] arrived with his Company Last Saturday night we have had rain every day since we set out which made the traveling very wet and hard, But our men are in good Spirits and everyBody else we see—we shall not need any Provision, for we can Draw our allowance to morrow if we please, But we think Best to use our own as long as it Last—tomorrow enlisting orders are to be given out to Raise a standing army. Several of the other provinces have Sent and offered to Raise their part, those that enlist are to have one Coat and forty shilling a month, it is thought all the Cash that can be sent will be much wanted, and we think if it could be obtain to send our money now in the Collectors* hand Down—you will Doubt-

*The "Collectors" were men selected by the rebels for the purpose of collecting the pay of the rebel soldiers. It was feared that the tax collectors might prove to be Tories and refuse to pay the rebel soldiers. The wages of the soldiers were always paid in specie which was collected at stated times by the "Collectors" and held subject to the orders of the soldiers who were liable to be in the field on pay day.

less here many false stories which we would not have you pay much Regard to, they have took Saml Murry, and John Ruggles prisoners who are under gard—we should be be very glad to see you if you think Best, as I have heard that Col Williams does, please to inform all our friends of our wellfare, Excuse this, as it is Late at night

I remains in Behalf of the Company your
Huml Sevt
Isaac Parker Clerk

Under this call for enlistment at headquarters, Lieut. Stebbins was the first of the Deerfield company to respond.

It has now been shown that Deerfield was in the front ranks of the rebellion, and that Joseph Stebbins was an officer in a military company which was zealously drilling before Washington received his commission as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army.

Many towns, like Deerfield, foresaw the coming struggle and made like preparations to meet it. Sunderland, nearby, organized a company of Minute men in the fall of 1774, and employed a "deserter" to drill them.

In Greenfield a company of Minute men were drilling under the direction of Capt. Timothy Childs, a veteran of the French War.

A paper in Memorial Hall signed by Jesse Billings and twenty-nine others shows how the matter was arranged in Hatfield before the authority was assumed by the Provincial Congress. "We the subscribers apprehending the military exercise is specially Requisite at this Day, and altho Capt. Allis, Lieut. Partridge and Ens. Dickinson have publicly declared that they will not act as military officers under the acts of Parliament in the support of the same. But we desire that they should call us together and exercise us by themselves or such others as they shall judge likely to teach and instruct us in the military art."

Worcester County, the home of Artemas Ward, was all on fire. Miss Ellen Chase, in her "Beginnings of the Revolution," recites the fact of seven regiments of one thousand men each drilling in local companies twice a week

in that county, and that the men had taken on the name of Minute men from being prepared to answer an alarm call at a minute's notice. At Marblehead the excitement ran still higher; there the rebels were drilling three or four times a week.

Richard Henry Lee, a distinguished Virginian statesman, said of the rebels at this period, they were "men trained to arms from their infancy." Does not the slaughter of British officers on Bunker Hill bear testimony to the truth of these words?

Instances might be multiplied but enough has been said to illustrate the spirit and the practice of these indomitable rebels.

I have dwelt at more length upon this subject of the early and earnest preparation for war by the patriots to show that the editor of the *New Republic* was very wide indeed of the mark when he recently published the following statement:—

"What, as a matter of fact, were the minute-men of the Revolution? They were citizens-at-large whom the Provincial congresses and the Committees of Safety of 1774 instructed to keep their powder-horns filled and hold themselves in readiness to shoot Britishers. They had had no military drill, and no practice except in shooting Indians and small game. They went down to defeat after defeat, they were chronically under-supplied with ammunition, they were hardly more than an armed rabble." To be sure the rebels were forced from Bunker Hill by Gage's swarm of Regulars and shortage of powder but, in effect, this action was equivalent to a victory. Gage had little stomach for another encounter with that sort of a "rabble," and how soon the British Regulars were driven clear of all Boston land and water!

We left Joseph Stebbins while serving as lieutenant in Captain Locke's company on the Lexington alarm, Apr. 20, 1775. This company arrived at headquarters on Monday, Apr. 24, and was at once broken up, Gen. Ward evidently preferring to use this new accession of force as units for filling the ranks of his new army, rather than as a new organization to be provided for. The next day Gen. Ward issued a call for volunteers to enlist

in the new army which he was raising to defy Gage. As fast as the men found places they were transferred to the rolls of the new service with pay from the day they left Deerfield. Capt. Locke was given a post of honor in the new army. In some way—it may have been his soldierly bearing or his known activity in the rebel cause—Stebbins had attracted the attention of Ward who, on April 27, appointed him Captain in Col. Jonathan Brewer's regiment, and his appointment was forwarded to the Continental Congress at Philadelphia. It may be a surprising statement, but it is a fact, that Stebbins was appointed a Captain in the rebel army nearly two months before Washington was placed in his exalted position.

For unexplained reasons, before Stebbins's commission was received, Ward placed Stebbins in Col. Prescott's regiment, and on the night of June 16, he was active with pick and spade at Bunker Hill, while the next day he was in the thickest of the fight, serving as a Captain under Brewer, with a company not fully recruited.

His commission, dated July 1, 1775, signed by John Hancock, President of the Continental Congress, now hangs in Memorial Hall. This Congress was made up of men selected from the leading spirits of the rebel colonies.

This commission shows Stebbins to have been a Captain in the Seventh Regiment raised by Washington for the Revolutionary Army.

The commission follows:—

In Congress.

The Delegates of the United Colonies of New-Hampshire, Massachusetts-Bay, Rhode-Island, Connecticut, New-York, New-Jersey, Pennsylvania, the Counties of New-Castle, Kent, and Suffex on Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North-Carolina and South-Carolina to Joseph Stebbins, Esquire.

We reposing especial Trust and Confidence in your Patriotism, Valour, Conduct and Fidelity DO by these presents constitute and appoint you to be Captain of a Company in the 7th Regiment, commanded by Col. Brewer, in the army of the United Colonies, raised for the Defense of American

Liberty, and for repelling every hostile Invasion thereof. You are therefore carefully and diligently to discharge the Duty of Captain by doing and performing all Manner of Things thereunto belonging. And we do strictly charge and require all Officers and Soldiers under your Command to be obedient to your orders as Captain. And you are to observe and follow such Orders and Directions from Time to Time, as you shall receive from this or a future Congress of the United Colonies, or Committee of Congress, for that Purpose appointed, or Commander in Chief for the Time being of the Army of the United Colonies, or any other your superior Officer, according to the Rules and Discipline of War, in Pursuance of the Trust reposed in you. This Commission to continue in Force until revoked by this or a future Congress.

July 1st 1775 By order of the Congress

John Hancock, President

Attest Chas Thomson Secy*

Having received his commission Capt. Stebbins was now a full-fledged soldier in the continental army which had been put by Congress under the command of George Washington, June 19, only eleven days before Stebbins's commission was made out. Let us note that this commission was issued in the same room and by the same body of men which had commissioned Washington Commander-in-chief of the rebel army.

Washington left Philadelphia June 21 to take command of the American army at Cambridge; this he did July 3, a memorable day in the history of the colonies.

Capt. Stebbins was in Col. Brewer's regiment which was then at Headquarters, Cambridge. Aug. 1, Stebbins's Company was full. We know that he was earnestly engaged under Brewer in driving Gage and Howe out of Boston. Bunker Hill had spoken in tones of thunder, Howe had taken counsel of prudence, and Boston was evacuated Mar. 17, 1776.

Owing to an unfortunate accident a large number of the old Stebbins family papers were destroyed, so that we have fewer particulars than we

*An examination will show that this commission was issued by twelve colonies only; as Georgia, the last, the thirteenth, had now taken its place, the presumption is that the economical secretary of the Second Congress utilized a printed form left over from the First Congress.

IN CONGRESS.

The DELEGATES *of the* UNITED COLONIES *of* New-Hampshire, Massachusetts-Bay, Rhode-Island, Connecticut, New-York, New-Jersey, Pennsylvania, *the Counties of* New-Castle, Kent, *and* Sussex *on* Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North-Carolina, *and* South-Carolina, *to* Joseph Stebbins Esq

WE reposing especial Trust and Confidence in your Patriotism, Valour, Conduct and Fidelity, DO by these Presents, constitute and appoint you to be Captain of a Company in the 7th Regiment, commanded by Col: Brewer

in the Army of the United Colonies, raised for the Defence of *American* Liberty, and for repelling every hostile Invasion thereof. You are therefore carefully and diligently to discharge the Duty of Captain by doing and performing all Manner of Things thereunto belonging. And we do strictly charge and require all Officers and Soldiers under your Command, to be obedient to your Orders as Captain And you are to observe and follow such Orders and Directions from Time to Time, as you shall receive from this or a future Congress of the United Colonies, or Committee of Congress, for that Purpose appointed, or Commander in Chief for the Time being of the Army of the United Colonies, or any other your superior Officer, according to the Rules and Discipline of War, in Pursuance of the Trust reposed in you. This Commission to continue in Force until revoked by this or a future Congress.

July 1st 1775.

By Order of the Congress,

John Hancock PRESIDENT.

Attest. Chas Thomson Secy

could wish of the Revolutionary service of Capt. Stebbins. At the time of the Declaration of Independence we find him in Cambridge in command of a company under Major-General Artemas Ward.

We come now to one of the leading events in the history of the Revolutionary War, in which Capt. Stebbins had an active part. I feel a just pride in paying all honor to my mother's father.

King George had sent Thomas Gage across the waves to straighten out affairs in and about Boston. Gage had failed and been recalled practically in disgrace. In 1777, Gen. John Burgoyne was sent with an army of Regulars and a horde of Hessians, with instructions to sweep the pestilent rebels off the face of the earth.

About the time the news reached here that Burgoyne's Hessians were marching toward New England—and their fate—orders were received for reinforcing the rebel army in northern New York.

Capt. Stebbins was now—August, 1777—in Deerfield. With Lieut. John Bardwell and 45 men he marched directly to Bennington. They were too late for the battle, but they had the satisfaction of seeing the Hessians already prisoners in the meetinghouse. From Bennington Capt. Stebbins marched to Batten Kill, and joined the regiment of Col. David Wells of Shelburne. From there they marched to Fort Edward to cut off the retreat of Burgoyne's army. While at Fort Edward Capt. Stebbins called for volunteers to follow him across the Hudson to surprise an outpost of Burgoyne near Fort Miller. I was personally acquainted with one of these volunteers, Jeremiah Newton of Deerfield, from whom I obtained considerable information concerning this campaign. In September, 1777, Burgoyne appeared with an apparently invincible force near Saratoga. On the 19th a fierce engagement occurred with Gates and his rebels in which both parties claimed the victory. On the 20th the struggle was renewed. Burgoyne was totally defeated and driven from the field. The King's sweepers were smothered in the dust they had raised. Burgoyne's shattered army became hemmed in by Gates and mortally wounded. All the healing waters of Saratoga could bring no balm to Burgoyne. He found no

avenue of escape. On Oct. 17, he was a prisoner with his whole army in the hands of the rebel General. Thus ended the memorable battle of Saratoga and the boastful campaign of Burgoyne.

It was now that our Deerfield heroes saw the head of the proud Briton humbled to the earth.

Burgoyne had discovered his mistake. He had declared a few weeks before that the rebels were made up of the lowest stratum of the peasantry with few or no respectable persons among them. He had no more idea that he should be successfully opposed by this riff-raff than he had of riding on horseback to the moon.

The trained troops of Burgoyne were contesting only for their King, and must of necessity, in the long run, give way before the Patriots who, inspired by the spirit of freedom, were desperately struggling for their own individual sovereignty.

Men of might had come to the front and were declared leaders by acclamation. In fact, a new and powerful nation had sprung into being based on individual rights.

We now exhibit in Memorial Hall a few spoils of the Saratoga campaign. One item is a linen towel brought home by Capt. Stebbins, and a brass candlestick secured by Capt. Maxwell of Charlemont, both from the personal belongings of Burgoyne. Stebbins also brought back part of a manuscript-book belonging to the commissary department of Burgoyne's army. The last entry made in it by the department was Oct. 8, 1777. This book contained a detailed account of rations given out to the Tory volunteers and camp assistants, six hundred and seventy-five names appearing on the pages preserved. An examination shows that this book was utilized by the Continentals as an orderly book at "Headquarters, Fort Edward," Oct. 13, 14, 15. On the 14th Col. David Wells was field officer of the day with 47 of his men on guard duty. On one of the blank pages of the book Capt. Stebbins, on Oct. 18, made up a pay roll of his own company. This list of the men is here given save that the names of the privates are placed alphabetically; one hundred and fifteen miles travel was allowed to each man.

Capt. Joseph Stebbins	Sergt. Daniel Slate	Corp. Samuel Gladding
Lt. John Bardwell	Sergt. Samuel Turner	Corp. Jason Parmenter
Sergt. George Herbert	Corp. David Hoyt	Drummer, James Warren
Sergt. Abel Parker	Corp. Zibah Phillips	Fifer, Justin Hitchcock

Privates

Allen, Joseph	Frary, Nathan	Parker, Samuel
Andrews, Nehemiah	Galt, John	Sanderson, Joseph
Beaman, John	Gray, David	Sheldon, Amasa
Billings, Thomas	Gray, Robert	Sheldon, Cephas
Bliss, David	Harding, Abiel	Stone, Elias
Burt, Ithamar	Joiner, Edward	Taylor, Eliphalet
Burt, Simeon	Joiner, William	Taylor, John
Catlin, Timothy	Maxwell, Philip	Tute, Moses
Childs, Lemuel	Miller, Tilotson	Webster, Stephen
Connable, John	Newton, Jeremiah	Wells, Thomas
Dickinson, Eliphalet	Newton, Levi	Wheat, Samuel
Faxon, Thomas	Orvis, William	

The day after the surrender of Saratoga, Capt. Stebbins and his company took the trail for home, the blood of each tingling with the consciousness that he had done something to bring about this glorious result.

We must leave to the imagination the stories these gallant soldiers told to their neighbors and one another while peacefully smoking their pipes at their evening haunt in the store of Col. David Field, which stood under the folds of the liberty flag, opposite the home of their Captain.

Comparatively little is known of Capt. Stebbins's military history during the closing years of the war. In 1779 and 1780 he is in lists of soldiers "serving short terms from Deerfield." In 1781 he was commissioned Lieutenant-Colonel in the "Fifth regiment of militia in the County of Hampshire." This commission signed by John Hancock, Governor of Massachusetts, now hangs in Memorial Hall. This year Stebbins enlisted for three years or the war. In the late autumn of 1783 Washington discharged all the soldiers whom he had so enlisted.

Lieut.-Col. Stebbins assisted Gov. Hancock in the troublous times of Shays's Rebellion, and the arms taken from these truculent malcontents were stored for safe keeping in his garret. With all the temptations of the owners to recover their arms by force, Gov. Hancock must have had great confidence in the martial or mental power of the Lieutenant-Colonel.

May 22, 1788, Lieut.-Col. Stebbins was commissioned by Gov. Hancock, Colonel of the Second Massachusetts regiment.

On the death of Washington, Deerfield had appropriate and imposing ceremonies. It was certainly fitting that Col. Stebbins should be one of five who conducted the obsequies on that occasion.

In addition to his active military career Col. Stebbins performed his part in the civil life of the community. He was eight years on the board of selectmen, and often held minor offices of the town.

Col. Stebbins was much interested in education and was a member of a corporation which established a private school on the Town Street. He was one of four citizens of Deerfield who petitioned for and secured from the General Court a charter for the Deerfield Academy in 1797. In 1806 he presented a planetarium and lunarium to the collection of scientific apparatus of the Academy, thus showing his interest in scientific studies.

We have followed the career of Joseph Stebbins so far as known, and have found him always and early in the foremost ranks of workers. He played his part faithfully and well at the outbreak of the Revolution, the time of his country's direst need. He lived to see the colonies free, and a nation leading the world.

This book should be ret
the Library on or before the
stamped below.
A fine of five cents a day is
by retaining it beyond the
time.
Please return promptly.

US 12779.12
Joseph Stebbins, a pioneer at the o
Widener Library 006990185
3 2044 086 355 138